



H.R. 767 – Refuge Ecology Protection, Assistance, and Immediate Response Act

FLOOR SITUATION

H.R. 767 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Ron Kind (D-WI) on January 31, 2007. The bill was referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources and it was ordered reported by unanimous consent.

H.R. 767 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House of Representatives on October 22, 2007.

SUMMARY

H.R. 767 establishes a grant program for states, Indian tribes, and other entities looking to assist in the elimination of “harmful nonnative species” from wildlife environments. A nonnative species is any species, its seeds, eggs, or spores that may cause a negative or economic impact in the region it inhabits.

In order to be eligible for a grant:

- The project proposed must control harmful nonnative species on lands or waters in the region the project is proposed,
- Include a plan for monitoring the area to prevent any return of the species,
- be conducted in cooperation with a national wildlife refuge or refuge complex, and;
- Encourage public outreach.

The legislation also sets up an advisory committee to the Secretary to assist in the distribution of grants and advice on which projects are grant worthy according to a list of guidelines that the Secretary will propose.

The grants will be administered for a maximum of two years and for a maximum of three additional years if the project is deemed to be working satisfactorily. The grantee is required to report to the Secretary every 24 months or whenever the project is completed, whichever is less time.

The legislation authorizes such sums as the Secretary deems necessary in order to address the issues of harmful nonnative species.

BACKGROUND

Harmful nonnative species are any animals, plants, insects, and other organism that may cause harm to the habitat in which it lives. This harm may be environmental in nature or economical, such as when a new predator is introduced to a population. The Snakehead fish is an example. These fish are kept as aquarium animals and are shipped as live food. When introduced into U.S. waters they have devastating effects on the local fish population. Another talked about nonnative species is the Asian Longhorned Beetle, which has caused the destruction of thousands of trees across US metropolitan areas.

The purpose of this legislation is to promote studies and projects aimed at eradicating nonnative species from areas where they are prevalent. There are currently more than 675 known harmful nonnative plant species and 4,471 invasive animal populations in the National Wildlife Refuge System. The National Wildlife Refuge System has 548 refuges and 38 wetland management districts.

The grants established within this legislation will go towards the efforts of early detection, monitoring, and disposal of harmful nonnative species. The projects seek to assist the National Wildlife Refuge system with its backlog of work that needs to be done in order to eradicate harmful nonnative species. Additionally, it seeks to help promote the cooperation of state, local, and private entities in dealing with the nonnative species.

COST

At the time of publication the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) had not yet scored this legislation.

STAFF CONTACT

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